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### CROMER CRABS AND THEIR COUSINS.

As Everton is noted for its toffee, Burton for its ale, Melton-Mowbray for its pork pies, and Yarmouth for its bloaters, so Cromer, on the coast of Norfolk, is renowned for its crabs. Other places, to the right and left, have a share in reaping the crustacean harvest on the North Norfolk coast; but they do not give their names to their spoil; the crabs which their fishermen catch are 'Cromer Crabs.' The fishing-ground is a rocky area extending for twenty miles along the coast, and for about four miles out from the shore. There are eight miles of it to the west of Cromer, and twelve to the east.

Both the crabs and their cousins the lobsters are caught by means of traps called 'pots,' familiar objects to visitors at those seaside resorts, where this branch of fishing is pursued. These pots are quite a modern invention, having been introduced between twenty and thirty years ago. Before that time, hoops were used, weighted with lead, and with a net stretched beneath, into which fell any crab or lobster engaged with the bait when the hoop was hauled up. The work was very laborious, for, as long as the tide served, the hoops had to be continually examined. As soon as the last of the series had been raised, back the men went to the first. When the tide ran too strongly for the hoops to be worked, they were brought ashore. As they did not imprison the fish, it was useless to leave them in the sea.

The traps of to-day are one foot nine inches long, by one foot three inches wide at the bottom, which is a frame of heavy iron bars supporting bows of wood, over which is stretched thick string netting of home manufacture. A funnel-shaped aperture in each side conducts the crab or the lobster to the interior of the cage, while a side-door, which can be easily let down, provides for the withdrawal of the captives. The pots run away with a considerable portion of their owners' hard earnings. They cost about six shillings each by the time they are fitted up; the netting has to be renewed every year, and not a few are

carried off or cut adrift by passing ships. The Cromer men are more liable to this misfortune than their neighbours at Sheringham, as their ground is more in the track of vessels. Occasionally lines which have been cut by ships and steamers are seen at low tides, and the pots to which they are attached are recovered; but in spite of this, many lose from twelve to twenty pots in a single season.

The men work in couples, and the two partners will own between them from sixty to eighty pots. These are taken out to sea a few at a time, and unless damaged, are not again brought to shore until the end of the season. To each pot is attached a stout line ten fathoms (sixty feet) in length, and to this line are affixed a number of cork-floats, looking like so many dirty ship biscuits. On the float nearest the free end of the line are cut the initial letters of the owner's name.

The pots are not sunk close together, but are separated by a considerable space, so that ships may have a chance of passing between the floating lines. To an ignorant landsman, it would seem a matter of great difficulty for the fishermen to recognise the spot where their pots were deposited, and to single out their own property from that of their neighbours; for, in the height of the fishing season, the surface of the water is so dotted with floats that sufficient room for additional pots can scarcely be found. The task, however, is less like that of looking for a needle in a bottle of hay, than the uninitiated would imagine. By carefully noting, when the pots are laid, the relative position of prominent landmarks, the men are able to find their own lines with comparative ease. The pots can be examined only during slack tides, because when the water is high the floats are covered and out of sight.

While in some respects lobsters and crabs are identical in their habits and manners, there are other points in which they greatly differ, and these have to be regarded by their would-be captors. As is not unfrequently the case with relatives, it is better that they should dwell apart,

and, as a rule, this fact is recognised by them, the lobsters keeping near the shore, while the crabs are mostly met with farther out. A crab which ventures within reach of a lobster does so at the peril of his life. If seized by his aristocratic cousin, he will assuredly be killed by him, and not only killed, but eaten. No crab is allowed to enter a pot into which a lobster has made its way; and if one should be there when the lobster arrives, there will soon be nothing left of him but the shell. These empty shells are sometimes all that remain to tell the fishermen what they might have had if their visit had been more fortunately timed.

The lobster is much more agile than the crab, and having eaten whatever food he can find within a pot, clammers about the netting until he discovers one of the ever-open apertures in the sides, and then he passes once more into freedom. When fishing for lobsters, it is therefore necessary for the men to examine their pots as frequently as possible. Crabs, being slower in their movements, do not so readily escape, and an extra good haul is anticipated if the pots are unraised for a longer period than usual.

Lobsters are not only evilly disposed towards crabs, but, sad to say, they do not bear goodwill to one another. As soon as they are safely landed, their formidable nippers are encircled with a piece of string to prevent them mangling their neighbours. They are most pugnacious creatures. If two happen to meet in a confined space, they will at once 'make for' each other's eyes. In the words of an ancient mariner, 'they fight like men.'

Perhaps it is because crabs are less active than lobsters that the pots, into which it is hoped the former will crawl, must be moved to fresh ground every time they are examined, otherwise few or none will be caught. On the other hand, the pots for lobsters may be dropped on the very spot from which they were raised, without the subsequent catch being thereby lessened.

In the matter of food, our crustacean friends have dissimilar tastes, and this fact is manifested in the character of the bait used. The crab likes his meat to be quite fresh; while the lobster, in spite of the avidity with which, as we have seen, he will clean out the shell of a newly-killed crab, prefers flesh that is decidedly 'high.' Indeed, the staler it is, the more tempting it is to his appetite. The bait is placed between two leathern thongs, and is kept in its position by a sliding button. It formerly consisted mainly of portions of small flat fish, locally called 'butts,' which were sent in great quantities from Lynn and Yarmouth. These, however, are much less plentiful than they were, and therefore plaice, codlings, or any other fish that happen to be handy, are used.

Along the North Norfolk coast, large open boats, which carry a small, dark-coloured sail, are used in this fishery. They are much too heavy to be brought upon the beach, or even to be launched by the two men who form the little crew of each; but, by the men of several boats helping each other, the difficulty is easily overcome. Instead of the rowlocks being formed in

the usual way by the insertion of pegs in the gunwale, they are holes in the sides of the boat. These have the great advantage of preventing the oars being lifted out of their places by heavy seas, and also of affording convenient means of conveying the boat high and dry upon the beach. On the return to land, when the boat has grounded, oars are run through the rowlocks, and being grasped by men on either side, the vessel is carried to a spot where it will not be floated by the advancing waves.

The Cromer fishermen are not a numerous body; all told, they do not now number quite seventy, and are gradually becoming still fewer, for their sons do not, as a rule, take to the sea. Most of the Cromer men have therefore long passed the heyday of youth. The fishing population of the neighbouring village of Sheringham is more than four times that of Cromer, and is increasing, for it is the exception there for the boys of a fisherman's family not to follow their father's calling.

Crabs may be caught all the year round. There is no close-time, but the regular fishing season generally begins at the end of March, and lasts till September or October. Occasionally, it begins in February. The weather is the principal factor in determining when the pots shall be laid down and when they shall be removed.

Long before the end of the season, the pots become thickly covered with long weeds, through which imprisoned fish can with difficulty be seen. Vegetation also attaches itself to the lines, and makes them slippery. They have therefore to be brought ashore from time to time and cleaned. The professional way of doing this is to make the line into a coil, leaving two or three feet at one end free, and then, seizing the end, to repeatedly swing the whole overhead and forcibly dash it upon the wet sand, over which it is dragged by continuing the circular motion of the arm. When the line is judged to be sufficiently cleansed, it is hung up to dry, and at the end of a week is fit to replace another that has become too foul.

Lobsters are protected for a month—from June 25th to July 25th, the height of the hatching season. When the fishing for lobsters begins, they have just changed their shells, and are so hungry that more are then caught than at any other time of the year. As soon as they get firm and strong, they 'take the ground'—in other words, go into holes, and then the catches are smaller. Lobsters under eight inches in length may not be brought ashore. Those of the minimum size weigh half a pound, and usually leave this world from the supper and dining tables of the local hotels. At those establishments, lobsters weighing from one-half to three-quarters of a pound are greatly preferred to any others, and none scaling over a pound are willingly bought. The fishing-ground off Cromer produces plenty of lobsters reaching the respectable weight of three and four pounds, and some manage to escape capture until they weigh from five to six pounds. Very large fish cannot get into the pots, but reach the bait from the outside, and are hauled up while thus pleasantly engaged, or are caught on the hooks when the men are 'line-fishing.'

The protection of the law is to some extent thrown over crabs of tender age, for those which

are less than four and a quarter inches across may not be brought ashore. Those landed vary from half a pound to a pound and a half in weight; but the larger ones are not numerous, three-quarters of a pound being the average weight of the individuals sold in the course of the season. Crabs of this size are too small for the London markets, although they find a ready sale elsewhere. Cromer crabs are disposed of chiefly in Norwich and Yarmouth. They are sent thither alive. In cool weather they will live for three days after being drawn from the water; but in hot weather they do not survive twelve hours.

The number of crabs captured annually on the north coast of Norfolk is almost incredible. Mr Frank Buckland calculated that the fifty Cromer boats of his time would, even if the luck was bad, catch a thousand daily, which would give for the season a total of 158,000; while for a good season the captives would amount to 1,422,000. It is mainly the weather which makes a season good or bad. When the temperature is low, the creatures remain in their holes. Warm weather tempts them to wander abroad, and then it is the fishermen have a chance of entrapping them. In winter-time it is an unusual thing for good crabs and lobsters to be found on the beach after a gale. A rough sea 'scores' or destroys their beds, and some of the animals so disturbed get washed ashore. Many years ago, cartloads were picked up after one exceptionally heavy gale. The men feared that the ground had been depleted; but the following season was one of the best they ever had.

It is more than probable that a large buyer, ignorant of the peculiar arithmetic adopted by the captors of Cromer crabs when disposing of those dainties, would be somewhat surprised at the number he received in response to an order, say for a hundred. For some inscrutable reason, two crabs are counted as one, the two being called a 'cast,' and six score of these is called a hundred; so that the buyer of a Cromer hundred actually gets two hundred and forty. This strange method of computation is not followed in the case of lobsters; they are counted in the ordinary way.

Mr Frank Buckland's attention was officially directed to the fishery on account of its deterioration through the destruction of little crabs and of lobsters full of spawn. His Report resulted in the legislative enactments to which reference has been made. The Cromer fishermen, at any rate, would welcome the imposition of further restrictions. As the law at present stands, crabs which, by reason of their diminutive size, may not be sent to market, may be used as bait.

The Cromer men profess to release all the immature fish which they draw from the sea, and declare that any of their number who used little crabs for bait would suffer a greater loss of pots than could be attributed to the accidental cutting of the lines by passing vessels. Similar damage would befall any Sheringham man who ventured to try his luck on the Cromer ground. 'They have spoilt their own ground,' say the Cromer men; 'but they shan't spoil ours.'

When the crabs and lobsters have gone into their winter-quarters, then the herring-fishing begins. Terrible work this is, for the poor men have to remain at sea all night in their open boats,

Long-line fishing also is followed during the autumn and winter months. To each line are attached some eight hundred hooks, which are baited with mussels, an operation which occupies a good five hours, as the protecting shells of each mussel must be forced open before the fish within can be impaled.

But there are times when fishing is not the most profitable employment that can be pursued. Many of the Sheringham men have every year a spell of agricultural labour; while, during the height of the visitors' season, most of the Cromer fishers are engaged with the bathing-machines and pleasure-boats.

If the reader is a lover of lobsters, may it be his or her happy lot to visit Cromer when the fishermen are rejoicing in good luck, for then the price falls as low as sevenpence a pound; but even when the catches are not particularly good, the hawker's cry may be heard: 'Here's some rum uns; here's some big uns, all fresh boiled, and only sixpence each. Here's a treat this morning.'

#### THE BURDEN OF ISABEL.\*

##### CHAP. XXX.—TANDERJEE RECEIVES A CHEQUE, AND DANIEL FINDS A KEY.

GEORGE SUFFIELD was troubled by Isabel's letter, and by a gentle note from his father which he received about the same time—his father said he had heard disquieting rumours about cotton, but he would leave them to be talked over when he came down for Christmas, unless George thought there was anything of pressing importance to communicate—for they both had heard, 'on good authority'—matters, in fact, of which he had hoped that no one outside them suspected the existence. Yet it was characteristic of George that the fact of his proceedings being guessed at or suspected scarcely made him doubt the sufficiency of the means he had taken to keep them hid: it did little more than make him angry with the 'good authorities'—whoever they were—who had been so prying as to guess or suspect. So he merely wrote to his father that he had nothing disquieting to communicate; and then he wrote to Isabel with reassurance and fervour—and in the heat of the reassurance and fervour he went on in the course to which he was committed, and from which he saw neither reason nor necessity for departing.

For the cotton business was rapidly coming to a head—coming to such a head and gathering of offence as the trusting George did not suspect. All things seemed going well. Prices had gone up and down, just as Gorgonio and George had hoped they would. And that cargo of Indian—for which George had given Tanderjee an advance—had arrived, and had proved a conspicuous success. It had been of good quality, and had helped to raise the reputation of Indian in the market; and since there was the rumour of more of as good quality from the same quarter, it had sent down prices sufficiently to enable Gorgonio to make many more large purchases with the view to

cornering. And yet prices kept pretty much at a steady level in their careless way ; for, though many believed that Gorgonio was trying to corner, no one believed that he could—that he had either money or experience enough—but especially not money enough—to carry him through.

George was thus in very hopeful mood when, one day early in December, Tanderjee came to him in the city office of the Suffields. He carried in his hand a roll of sample cotton, which, after a brief word of greeting, he opened out before George. ‘It is good—is it not, Mr Suffiel?’ he said. ‘It is clean, soft, long. It is excellent cotton—think you not, sir?’

‘It is very good, certainly,’ said George, after examining it. ‘Indian, I suppose?’

‘It is Indian, of course, Mr Suffiel.’

‘And you want me to do something with it, I suppose?’

‘My people is very poor, and Mr Suffiel’ is very rich : it is what the wise say—the rich man have the advantage. My people will gladly sell you at reduced price, on the old terms, as before, again.’

‘How much is there?’

‘There is sufficient, Mr Suffiel’, to fill two steamer.’

‘That is a great deal. I don’t think I can do anything without consulting Mr Gorgonio : I must ask him how it would affect our other business.’

‘That is all quite correct, Mr Suffiel’. Send for Mr Gorgonio at once : the telegraph will bring him.’

So George sent a telegram to Gorgonio, inviting him to come over at once from Liverpool on business, and Tanderjee departed for an hour or two. Gorgonio came with speed and a look of expectation, though he already knew all about the business, and had been waiting in his Liverpool office for the arrival of the summons. George set the matter before him, and he appeared to consider the carpet very deeply and closely. Then he raised his head and spoke. He begged Mr Suffiel’ to observe that the business was like this : The cotton would in any case come to Liverpool ; for their purpose they did not wish more cotton to come for some weeks ; but cotton *would* come. What then ? Was it not better that he should have the control of it from the beginning, than be compelled to reckon with it, deal with it, and perhaps fight with it when it came ?

‘Buy it, then, Mr Suffiel’, said Gorgonio—‘buy it, and let me receive it for you, and warehouse it, and sell it gradual, by parcels, at the top price.’

Finally, George agreed to that suggestion ; and when Tanderjee came in to receive his answer, he said he would buy the cotton on the former terms, and that Tanderjee might tell the Bombay people to draw on him at once for three-fourths of the amount. But Tanderjee urged a further request, with a low bow and his hand on his heart.

‘My people, Mr Suffiel’, is very poor, and you are very rich ; they have advise me that some money which they must pay me I will pay myself if I get the money from you. It will save the exchange from English into Indian, and from

Indian into English again, and it will be very much more convenient for me in time. So, Mr Suffiel’, if you give me cheque now for them, I pay myself, and it is quite correct.’

The statement seemed obscure, but George thought it was probably all right, and that its obscurity was only due to Tanderjee’s constrained English ; moreover, he had done business a good many times with Tanderjee and had always found him straightforward and correct ; and, therefore, being on the whole a simple, honourable, and kindly Englishman, he wrote out a cheque for seven thousand five hundred pounds, with which Tanderjee departed, leaving the air musical with his profuse thanks.

Next morning, Daniel Trichinopoly, while his master was occupied at the works, found he had business to do on his master’s account in the town ; and when in town, he called on Mr Tanderjee. Mr Tanderjee received him in his private office.

‘You have come, my son,’ said Mr Tanderjee in Daniel’s native tongue. ‘It is well, yea, twice well ; for all is ready on my part. What of yours, my son ? Do you in deed and in truth bring the plans in your bosom ?

‘I have searched all places, and all drawers in the office and in the house of my master, O worshipper of the sun, but I have found nothing !

‘Ah, still nothing, my son ! Still nothing, and nothing, and nothing !’ said Mr Tanderjee, pacing up and down and waving his arms, while his spectacles gleamed with distraction. ‘Is this, my son, the realm of Chola that we two dwell in, or is it the realm of deceit ? You permitted the son of a dog and a pig, the Gorgonio, discover our secret of the plans, so that he has demanded his share of the reward ! He has said, “The knife should be applied where there is flesh !” It is shameful to tell it, and painful to weep over it ! And now—now !—there are no plans ! And all things else are ready !’ Tanderjee looked as if he could ‘tear a cat’ in his despair.

‘There is still time, O worshipper of the sun,’ said Daniel sweetly. ‘It is impossible that we should go away until the Festival of Christmas is upon us. And there is still one place to search and examine ; but it is difficult.’

‘Oh, let not difficulty make your heart faint, O cunning one ! For is not the way to wealth difficult, and the door-step to riches slippery ? What is the one place still to search, my son ?’

‘It is the great box of iron that is called “Safe,” that stands in the office like a shrine. No man, as I hear, has ever seen it open, and when my master opens it he locks the outer door. Methinks there dwells in it the demon or spirit that brings the Sahib Suffield and Sahib George their luck !’

‘You are but a fool, my son Daniel. You have learned the religion of the English Sahibs as a deaf man listens to a song. You are still in the bonds of your native ignorance. The safe is but a strong box. See ; I have one, and there is no demon in it.’

He opened the door of a very small safe let into the wall over the fireplace, and let Daniel look in. But Daniel seemed scarcely reassured.

‘That box, O worshipper of the sun,’ said he, ‘is only a toy compared with the box I have

seen. And, moreover, how know I that a little demon does not dwell in your box when it is shut up for the night?

'The successful man knows no fear,' said Tanderjee. 'Be you successful, and you will laugh at the demons. The safe of Sahib George opens with a key, my son: where does the Sahib George keep that key?'

'It is that key, I believe, O worshipper of the sun, which the Sahib keeps in the pocket of his trouser, and fastened with a chain round his waist. Sahib George would defend that key with his life.'

'You must get possession of that key, my son.'

'I cannot do violence to my master,' answered Daniel. 'Moreover, if I offered violence to my master, which of us would prevail?'

'Your wits are becoming dull, O cunning one,' said Tanderjee. Then suddenly bethinking himself, and frowning, he stepped up to Daniel and shook all his fingers in his face. 'We dwell in deceit, my son! You hide your meaning under green leaves of stupidity! When the jackal becomes fat he can hunt no more: is it not so, my son? The English Sahib feeds the dog well, and it longs to dwell with him—is it not so?'

'Is it good to cut a man's throat after gaining his confidence?' said Daniel sulkily. 'Is it well to betray a man who has fed you with his bounty? The Sahib George has given me his confidence, the Sahib has fed me with his bounty: you may take the key of safe yourself, O worshipper of the sun: *I will not!*'

Daniel was turning to the door, but Tanderjee intercepted him. He shook his fingers in Daniel's face; he threatened; he cursed—in Tamil—and finally he whined, for Daniel stood calmly listening to all his moods.

'Why will you make me frantic, O cunning one?' said Tanderjee. 'You mean it but for a pleasuretry—do you not?—that you may see I need you as much as the carpenter needs a saw. Think you the reward I have promised is not enough, O cunning one? Is it so?'

'If a man sells his honour for a Cash,' asked Daniel, 'can he buy it back for a Crore? I will sell my honour only for a Crore, O worshipper of the sun, so that I may have wherewithal to buy it back.'

'You are a hard bargain-driver, O cunning one,' said Tanderjee. 'But I will increase your reward to half of the money which I have received when you put into my hands the plans.'

'Copies of the plans, O worshipper of the sun.'

'Be it so—copies of the plans.'

Then it was arranged between them that Daniel should find means as speedily as possible to handle the key of the safe, and to take a wax impression of it, which he would give to Tanderjee, and that Tanderjee would thus get made a copy of the key, which he would give to Daniel. It was for some time a point of contention whether or not Daniel when he had discovered the plans should bring them to Tanderjee for aid in the copying; Tanderjee thought he must; but Daniel—clearly distrusting Tanderjee—thought he need not: he was clever enough to do the

copying himself in the place where he should find them.

It was now necessary for Daniel to tell first of all what key was the key of the safe. That very evening, when George sat alone at dinner, Daniel made an attempt.

'With regard, Mister George,' said he, with simple guile, 'may I be permit to ask the question: what you keep at the end of the chain which chain you like a prisoner?'

'A key, Daniel,' answered George carelessly.

'Nothing but a mere simple profane key, Mister George?' exclaimed Daniel. 'If I am not very troublesome to mention, the same time I must say it is singular and strange, etcetera, for a gentlemans to wear a key tied with a chain to the middle of his body. With regard—I beg to excuse, Mister George—why that key do not it hang on its respected nail like other key? But it would not be an astonishment to know that it is a pet key, a key of worship, a key of gold.'

'It is in a sense a key of gold,' laughed George, taking the bright little steel instrument from his pocket, 'for it is the key of the safe.'

'Ah,' said Daniel. 'The key of safe? And may I beg to know? "Safe" is called that great box of iron in the Sahib's office?'

'That's it,' said George, tired of the subject.

It was not difficult for Daniel—in spite of his contrary protestations to Tanderjee—to find an opportunity to hold the key a few minutes in his hand in the frequently recurring aid he gave to George in dressing or undressing; and when a copy of the key was made, it was not difficult for Daniel—not very difficult—to open the safe, and to search for the plans, in spite of the genius of the Suffields which resided there; and when the plans were at last found, it was not beyond the powers of Daniel—had he not been carefully taught reading, writing, ciphering, and drawing by good Englishmen?—to make excellent copies of them.

On the whole, then, there is no room for amazement that Christmas had not yet come, though it was at hand, when Daniel sent a note to Mr Tanderjee, containing these words only: 'All is ready. Prepare.'

#### THE TRANS-SIBERIAN RAILWAY.

THE great scheme of an iron band to connect the extreme eastern with the extreme western boundaries of the giant Empire of Russia is at last in process of being carried out. The Trans-Siberian Railway bids fair to become an accomplished fact before the British public realises that it has been begun—much less the possibilities which it enfolds. But when St Petersburg is joined by rail with Vladivostok, a new era in the intercourse between West and East will begin. Such a railway has long been the dream of Russians—certainly since the days of the Crimean War; and several years ago a Committee of Experts was appointed by the Czar to consider the various routes proposed, to decide upon the best, and to determine whether the line should be continuous from end to end, or only constructed to unite

the navigable rivers. In 1890 this Committee reported in favour of a continuous line, starting from Ufa, on the European side of the Ural Mountains—already connected by rail with Samara and the Volga Basin—and running through Slatoust, Tomsk, Krasnoiarsk, and Nijni Udzinsk to Irkutsk, should thence be carried along the line of the Amur River to Vladivostok, the outermost outport of Russia in the east, and her naval and commercial emporium in the Sea of Japan.

A glance at the map will show that by this selection of route the railway will skirt the northern frontiers of Mongolia, and thus have a chance of drawing traffic from the Chinese Empire—not to mention the strategic value in the event of possible quarrels with that rival Asiatic power. But there were other good reasons for the selection. For instance, the entire length between the two termini indicated is 4900 miles; but the Samara Railway has already been carried through Ufa and across the Ural Mountains to the gold-mining town of Miarsk, a distance of some one hundred and twenty miles. By so much, therefore, is the construction of the Trans-Siberian line shortened, although one hundred and twenty miles is but an insignificant proportion in nearly 5000. But, again, the first of the three sections into which the experts have divided the line, that from Slatoust to Tomsk, is through a flat country, in which construction will be easy, which is well peopled, and which, by a small branch, can draw considerable intermediate traffic from the region of the Altai, as well as secure the increasing traffic of the valleys of the Obi and the Irtish. This section, indeed, will drain what many people regard as the future granary of the Old World. We are too much accustomed to think of Siberia as a barren, inhospitable region of frost and ferocity; but as a matter of fact there are three Siberias—frigid, temperate, and torrid. And the railway is designed for the most part to traverse the temperate and most productive belt.

The second section, between Tomsk and Irkutsk, has probably not much to expect from the products of the soil; but, on the other hand, this is, perhaps, the richest auriferous region of Siberia. The third section, from Irkutsk to Vladivostok, is the most difficult and expensive of all, having to run through a country very thinly populated, in parts, indeed, one might say uninhabited, with an inhospitable climate, and presenting many engineering difficulties. This will be the most costly part of the line, both to construct and to maintain.

It is proposed that there shall be stations every thirty miles or so along the whole line, and that the wider rivers shall not be bridged, but crossed by steam-ferries. The probable cost is variously estimated at from thirty-five to fifty-five million pounds; but judging by experience of the work so far, it is more than probable it will exceed the higher figure.

Some Russian critics have rather objected to a route having been chosen which for a considerable distance exposes the line to risk of damage by Manchurian bandits, if not of interference under the ægis of Chinese officials, who, as a class, are by no means yet favourably disposed to railways. But the advantages are held to outweigh the dangers; and, moreover, it is understood that Russian diplomats have arranged a satisfactory understanding with the authorities at Pekin.

The Report of the Committee of Experts above referred to was in due time followed by the issue of an Imperial ukase ordering the construction of the railway. It is said that the Czar's advisers were much divided on the subject, owing to the immense sum of money involved, and that it was because of these differences of opinion that the Imperial order was not given until May 1891. One does not hear that any of the Czar's advisers pleaded for the expenditure of the money in a way much more calculated to improve the condition of the Russian peasantry—namely, by the extension of railway communication in European Russia. The matter was regarded as a military one, the opponents of the railway contending that the money could be better applied on fortifications and so forth; while the advocates of the railway contended that it would be more useful than fortifications, and certainly not less valuable in the defences of the Empire.

And here it should be mentioned that the idea of a railway across Siberia was first suggested by General Mouravieff, the governor of East Siberia during the Crimean War. It is, perhaps, not generally remembered now that one of the first operations of the allied forces was an attack upon the Russian outposts in the Pacific; and the narrow escape which Russia had on that occasion of being permanently shut off from the Eastern seas, led to a great development of her military arrangements in Siberia. It was then that the danger to which the Czar's Asiatic dominions are exposed by their separation from the base of supplies suggested a railway. Like the Trans-Caspian line—which, by the way, there is a plan to run northward to join the Trans-Siberian line at some future date—the Trans-Siberian railway is political and military in origin and design.

The line is being built from both ends, but most effort is in the meantime being directed to the eastern and most difficult section. About the middle of 1891 the first sod was cut at Vladivostok by the Czarewitch; and since then the work has been steadily prosecuted. For about two hundred and fifty miles from Vladivostok the line passes through what is styled the Ussuri section, being the country watered by the Ussuri branch of the Amur. This is an undeveloped region of great mineral wealth, but so diversified in its physical aspects as to provide many tough engineering problems. Wherever practicable, tunnelling is being avoided by detours, the engineers even preferring to build an embankment on which to carry the line round a hill than to cut through it. In the same way, a deep narrow inlet of the sea near Vladivostok is not being bridged, but the line is taken round it. One can under-

stand the avoidance of tunnels on the score of cost, but what saving can there be in the case of the bridge? None whatever, but the reverse—only military authorities declared the bridge too open to attack from a hostile fleet.

Some six thousand men, mainly Russian soldiers and Chinese labourers, are employed on the Ussuri section, which is expected to be open next year. It has cost, so far, about thirteen thousand pounds per mile, on which basis the entire railway would cost not thirty-five or fifty-five, but nearer sixty-five, millions sterling. But, as we have said, this eastern section is the most difficult, and will be the most expensive part of the work. On the other hand, it is to be remembered that the present railways in Russia have cost on the average about seventeen thousand pounds per mile, and that, although Siberia is exceptionally level, and is well supplied with timber, &c., yet the inhabited districts are widely separated, and climatic conditions must tend to serious interruptions of work. Of course the dispensing with bridges on some of the wide rivers may reduce the first cost; but this cannot be regarded as a permanent saving, as the bridges will sooner or later have to be supplied.

It is a mistake to suppose that Russia possesses great facilities for big undertakings in Asia in the way of free convict-labour. As a matter of fact, the convict problem is not less difficult in Siberia than in America, where, as has been seen, there are constant revolts against the employment of prison labour in competition with free labour. The introduction of convicts on to the works of the Trans-Siberian Railway led to complete disorganisation and frequent scenes of violence. Neither the Russian free labourers nor the soldiers would work along with them; and although, we believe, about a thousand convicts are still employed on the works, they are rather a source of trouble and anxiety than of profit to the Government.

From the western end, the Samara Railway is being actively pushed forward, and is expected to reach the Tobol River—on which is situated the city of Tobolsk—in the course of next year. From there it must reach Tomsk to complete the first section. It is a far cry from Tomsk to Irkutsk, while beyond Irkutsk the Ussuri section is but a small portion of the third great section. From Tomsk to Irkutsk is about eleven hundred miles; and from Irkutsk round the southern end of Lake Baikal, and by way of the Ussuri to Vladivostok, is about double the distance. At the present writing, there are about four thousand miles of railroad still to build. At the rate of progress of the last two years, the Trans-Siberian Railway will not be completed from end to end for other twelve years or so.

And then? Will it ever pay? That is not the question which troubles the Russian Government, any more than it affected the decision of the Czar when he applied the ruler to the map to show the route to be taken by the St Petersburg and Moscow Railway. But it must have some interesting results.

For instance, Vladivostok must become a great port; and already lines of steamers are being projected to run from there to America and Japan. In a recent Report to the Foreign Office on the trade of Corea, Consul Hillier refers

particularly to the future of Vladivostok. The port is already a place of great commercial importance, and its trade must be largely increased by the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway. Apart from the actual and potential traffic in Siberia itself, Consul Hillier points out that most of the brick-tea, which at present finds its way overland via Tientsin, will be sent by steamer from Hankow to Vladivostok for distribution through Siberia by railway. The sparsely-inhabited districts of the country will be occupied and utilised as the line is opened up, and a great increase of traffic with Corea is predicted. For four months of the year Vladivostok is ice-buried; but notwithstanding that, the natural advantages of its position, with railway communication with the west, will make it one of the most important places in the Far East. It is already a great naval station, and is strongly fortified, and as the great stronghold of Russia in the East, it will be the centre of constantly-growing activity.

But what is not generally known is that within fifty or sixty miles of Vladivostok has been discovered, and is now being developed, a particularly rich vein of anthracite coal. At present, this coal is being worked by English machinery and Chinese labour, and is sent down by lighters to Vladivostok. But a short branch will be constructed to connect the mines with the Trans-Siberian Railway; and, moreover, the whole Ussuri country is believed to be full of coal-fields. Here, then, is a great prospective source of traffic in itself, not to mention the solution of the fuel problem for the locomotives, and for the Russian steamers in the Pacific.

The whole region of the Amur is known to be rich in minerals, and gold, silver, and platinum have for years been mined, under disadvantageous conditions which the railway will remove. So long ago as 1858, there was quite an acute gold-fever in Russia, and an extensive rush took place to the Amur diggings.

It is now five years since the first train entered Samarkand, nine hundred miles from the Caspian Sea. This was accounted a great enterprise; but both in extent and in cost it does not represent one-fifth part of what is involved in the Trans-Siberian Railway, which, roughly speaking, will be about double the length of even the great Central Pacific line of the United States.

It is not reasonable to expect any great revenue to the railway from any through-traffic with China. In a few words, this expectation can be disposed of. Thus, experience in other countries has proved that railway transport under the most favourable conditions cannot be carried on with profit at less than one halfpenny per ton per mile. Let us, for the sake of argument, take eight thousand miles as the distance between Vladivostok and London, and let us assume that tea or silk could be delivered at Vladivostok as cheaply as at Hankow or Shanghai. Yet the railway rate would be, in round numbers, about seventeen pounds per ton, as against about two pounds per ton by steamer. There is thus no possibility of competition.

So much, however, has been done by railways in the opening up of the American Continent, that great things may reasonably be expected in Asia, only the autocratic system of government

is not in favour of rapid industrial development. That Siberia is capable of becoming a highly-productive country there is abundant evidence, and within the last year or two several travellers have referred in sanguine terms to the very great agricultural resources of the southern belt of the country.

Besides the great potential wheat-growing area, Southern Siberia has large tracts of land which seem specially marked out for stock-raising, and Siberian ranches are amongst the possibilities of the future. The actual gifts of nature ready to be grasped are in the trackless forests, in the bosom of the earth, and in the wealth of fur and of fish, the realisable value of which depends on accessibility of markets. A very large quantity of grain is already grown in Siberia, but as no present means exist of sending it to market, it is mainly used for distilling alcohol.

A good deal of manufacturing goes on in Siberia, recent statistics showing there are upwards of two thousand factories, such as tanneries, tallow-factories, distilleries, &c., in the provinces of Tobolsk and Tomsk alone. Siberian manufactures are for the most part sold in Asia; but markets could be found for much more in America and Europe were the railway completed. The imports of manufactured goods—almost entirely from Russia—amount to about fifteen millions sterling per annum; and of course the more the country developed internally, the more would it require the manufactured products of Europe. We have seen it stated that at Yakutsk, sugar sometimes rises to two shillings and sixpence per pound, and that valuable furs are often to be had in exchange for a little whisky!

Eastern Siberia, which includes an area of about three million square miles, and a population of one million and a half or so, has been heretofore almost entirely dependent on China for cotton, woollen, and silk fabrics. Yet this is the great mineral area of Northern Asia, the California of Russia, yielding several millions' worth of gold every year.

Whether the great wheat-lands of Siberia can ever be utilised for the supply of hungry Britain is a problem for the future to solve. But looking at the immense distances over which grain is transported by rail in America, it is not unreasonable to look at Asiatic Russia as a probable source of food-supply.

That the line can flourish, or even pay the interest on cost of construction, from local and intermediate traffic, unless there be immense agricultural and industrial development, need not be expected. Roughly speaking, there is at present in Siberia only one person to each square mile of territory. Now, in the United Kingdom the average amount of traffic is equal to about eight tons per head of the population; and in Germany to three and three-quarter tons; but in European Russia to only half a ton. On the same basis, and for the population within reasonable reach of the area of the railway, the local traffic would not amount to a million tons per annum.

In conclusion, it may be said that the distance by rail from St Petersburg to Vladivostok is computed at about six thousand miles, and that the time required for traversing this distance by train will be about sixteen days. In something

like three weeks, then, one should be able by the Trans-Siberian Railway to run from London to Yokohama, and within a month be amid the antiquities of Pekin, or amid the wilds of Kamchatka or Corea.

### JOHN UPCRAFT'S CRIME.

#### CHAPTER III.—TIDINGS.

THREE years went by. It was winter again. The marshlands lay beneath a thick coating of ice; the dikes were frozen pathways to the Thames; the pollards had grown white-headed with rime; and the only signs of life were the gulls coming in from the sea with their plaintive cry for food and shelter.

It was holiday-time. Jess was still a teacher at the village school. But she no longer felt ready to dance home along her path; for the promise of tidings which Upcraft had given her had never come. The girl had lost all hope. And yet she went about her duties cheerfully; the old routine of village life continued to run its uneventful course; and it was seldom that any one—unless it were her little friend Jim—detected a line of care upon her face.

One dismal afternoon—Jess having gone to spend the day with friends at Thurrock Hall—Mrs Gilkes sat warming herself over the kitchen fire. Mr Bryce was having his after-dinner nap, the only time when the woman got any rest at the cottage. Jim knelt upon the hearth-rug at his mother's side, rubbing his fat hands together, just as he knelt and warmed them upon the night of his expedition with Jess across the marshlands three years ago. Suddenly he touched his mother's arm. 'There's the firing agin!' said he, his small keen eyes glittering with excitement. 'Don't you hear it, mother?'

'Never mind the firing, Jim; get to work!' said Mrs Gilkes. 'It makes me downright queer to look at you when the convicts is abroad. It's high time you was a-growing out of it, and now you've begun to earn your own living too.'

Jim was on the point of replying, and not without impudence, to judge from his look, when there came a loud knock at the front door. He hurried down the passage to answer it. On the doorstep, under the porch, stood a tall man in a great fur coat. There was just enough light left in the gathering mist to see his face. Jim stared at him for a moment, and then gasped, as though he had received an unexpected blow in the back.

'Is Miss Bryce at home?'

'No, sir!'

'Mr Bryce?'

'Yes; he is. What—what name?'

'Tell him,' said the visitor, 'that a gentleman has called to see him.'

Jim rapped at the study door, and receiving an order to 'come in,' instantly obeyed.

'What's it all about?'

Mr Bryce sat upright in his armchair and looked sternly over his shoulder at the boy. Jim delivered his message.

'Why don't you show him in?' said Mr Bryce.

'I'm a-doing of it, ain't I?' And Jim opened the study door to its full extent.

The visitor stepped in. Having closed the door behind him with a jerk, Jim groped his way back to the kitchen as though he had been struck blind.

'Bless the boy,' cried Mrs Gilkes, catching her son by the shoulder as he leaned against the wall, 'how pale he is!'

'No, I ain't!'

'You are, Jim. You're as pale as if you'd see'd a ghost! It's all alonger the firing. You're a-worritting your head agin about them convicts,' said Mrs Gilkes. 'It ain't no good a-contradicting me.'

Jim made no further attempt at contradiction. He thrust his hands into his trousers pockets and stared wonderingly into the fire.

Meanwhile, Mr Bryce, who had been startled out of his nap, could make nothing of the visitor in the uncertain light of the afternoon.

'What do you want with me?' said he gruffly.

'Nothing. I've come,' was the reply, 'to see your daughter.'

The man's voice, and the dim outline of his face and figure as he stood between him and the light, brought a sudden look of hatred and indignation. 'Upcraft! Why, you are surely mad!'

'I'm perfectly sane.—Are you expecting her home?'

Mr Bryce got up from his chair and stood upon the hearth-rug with his back to the fire. 'I am expecting her home. But you had better not wait,' said he, in a significant tone. 'If you were a millionaire, and without reproach, you could not marry her now. You are supplanted—forgotten! Do you know Colonel Woodward? He lives at Thurrock Hall. That's the man she's going to marry. Do you doubt me? Ask the first village gossip you meet if it's not true!'

Upcraft went out without another word. Mr Bryce walked to the window and peered after him into the fog. He saw him pass into the high-road and turn his steps towards Thurrock village. Then he began to pace restlessly up and down his room. At intervals an elastic flame lit up his face; it was full of craftiness and fiendish thought. He had been scheming for years to marry Jess to Colonel Woodward of Thurrock Hall; and suddenly this man Upcraft became again an obstacle in his path!

A decanter stood on the table. He emptied the last drop out of it into his wine-glass, drank it off and then rang the bell. And now he stood grimly smiling, with his face half-turned towards the door; and he seemed as though listening to the signal-gun, that still boomed across the marshes like an ominous voice.

John Upcraft heard it too. He stopped abruptly, and pressed his hands to his ears to shut out the sound. It carried him back to that terrible night, three years ago, when he was out upon the marshlands, a miserable convict, shivering with acute ague. Surely he was still the convict—surely it was for him that the gun was firing! The old sense of horror recurred. He shook from head to foot; and it was only by repeatedly touching his fur coat and passing his hands over his limbs that he could convince himself that he was no longer in prison garb, no longer hunted. In his grief and overwhelming despair, he began to wish that Jessie Bryce had left him

to die in the marshes where she had found him. It would have been kinder, a thousand times kinder, than to have recalled him to life in order to subject him to this misery. For the moment he was sorely tempted to strike across the marshlands and reach the river-side, where with one leap he could end it all. But his better judgment soon prevailed. He conquered the momentary weakness, and went on towards the village with a growing strength of purpose in his step. There was no sense of shivering now, no thought of bending to destiny. The lights of Thurrock village had come in sight. He was erect and determined; and he presently walked into the village inn—an inn called the 'Old Hulk'—with little trace of the recent suffering to be seen in his resolute face. But the crowning test of Upcraft's moral strength now awaited him.

The bar-parlour of the 'Old Hulk' was small and cosy. There was a table in the centre, around which a number of men were seated. Some had drawn their chairs close to the board; while others sat back against the wall, seeming to prefer a more distant view of the glass or tankard to which they laid claim. The company had raised a pretty thick fog, in opposition to the fog outside, with their tobacco-smoke; and Upcraft, by way of making it denser, lit a cigar, after taking a vacant seat near the window. A light resembling an old ship's lamp hung from the ceiling. But Upcraft had no dread of being recognised, for this was almost the first time he had set foot in Thurrock village.

A silence had fallen upon the company when Upcraft came in, but only for a moment. An elderly man with a closely-shaven face soon took up the thread of talk. He gave a nod before he spoke, as if to challenge contradiction. 'So I say. He's a gentleman.'

'Ay,' chimed in a middle-aged, hook-nosed man—and a rich un too! What more do a girl want?'

'Look at his age!' said a youth, disparagingly. 'He's older than she be, yer see, by twenty year.'

'They haven't settled the day,' said a wrinkled person in the chimney corner, whom Upcraft took to be the sexton, 'have they?'

Before an answer could be given, a carriage drove up to the inn door, and all eyes were directed towards it. The landlord was seen to hurry out. Then the window of the carriage was let down, and a face appeared there in the light of the carriage lamp. It was Jess.

Upcraft's first impulse was to go out to the door and greet her. How beautiful she looked! A great yearning possessed him to hear her voice. He longed to touch her hand once more. But the impulse was quickly mastered. He sank back in his chair. She was in Colonel Woodward's carriage, and of course he was at her side. The taproom gossip had fairly confirmed old Bryce's words. She was Colonel Woodward's fiancée. It was too late!

Jess had stopped at the inn to inquire after a sick child. At the moment the horses were about to start off, she caught sight of Jim. The boy was flushed and out of breath. She stopped the carriage and looked out. 'What is it, Jim?'

'Let me in!' was his answer, as he raised his arm, trying frantically to reach the handle of the carriage door—'let me in!'

Jess opened the door: Jim scrambled up the step; and the carriage went on, by the marshland road, towards the cottage.

The boy's whole look and manner alarmed her. She drew him to her side, for they were alone in the carriage, and she waited impatiently for him to speak. In the silence, the boom of the signal-gun struck upon her ear for the first time to-night and set her heart beating fast.

'Look here, miss!' said Jim, the moment he recovered breath—'you know that convict? He's escaped agin!'

She caught him distractedly by the arm. Her face was now more eager than his: 'Tell me—quick! Have you seen him?'

'Seen him!' said Jim, with a wondering look. 'You know what dark eyes he's got? I know'd him agin the moment I met his eye. Don't you remember? I never see'd his face, rightly speaking: it was covered with mud; weren't it? His eyes was what I see'd. I was a-holding the lantern, and he opened 'em on me.—Look 'ee here, miss! He opened 'em on me this a'fternoon at the front door just the same.'

'Not at the cottage, Jim? He can't have been there!'

Jim nodded. 'He didn't stop long. He had a word or two with master; and then I heerd him go out. Then master rang his bell; and while mother went to answer it, miss,' said the boy, 'I slipt away. I ran down the road; I caught sight of him, though I couldn't catch him up. But I followed.'

'But why,' said Jess desperately, 'why have you lost sight of him now?'

'I haven't, miss. He's at the inn—at the "Old Hulk." Didn't you see him a-staring at you out o' the bar-parlour window a moment ago?'

A cry of delight was Jessie's only reply. She lowered the carriage window and put out her head. She could see a light in the cottage, shining dimly through the mist; and in another minute the carriage drew up at her home.

'Jim,' said she, laying her hand on his shoulder, 'stay where you are. I want you to take a letter to him instantly. Not one moment must be lost! The carriage will put you down at the inn. But not a word to any one—remember that! The letter I'm going to give you must be trusted to nobody. Place it yourself in his hands. Do you understand?'

'Yes, miss.'

Mrs Gilkes opened the door. 'You didn't happen to meet my Jim along the marshland road; did you, miss? He's at his tricks agin!'

'You needn't worry yourself about him,' said Jess. 'He's in the carriage, and he's going on an errand for me.' She entered the study while speaking, and finding it empty, sat down at her father's desk and wrote on a slip of paper: 'DEAR JOHN—Come back to me!—JESS.' This she put into an envelope and sealed; then she went out and handed it to Jim at the carriage window. 'You'll give it to no one else?' she reiterated—'or speak of it to a living soul?'

Jim promised; and the carriage drove away. Jess watched it out of sight; then she turned to

Mrs Gilkes, who still stood at the front door: 'Where's father?'

'Gone up to London, miss. He left a letter for you on the study table. Didn't you see it?'

'Gone to town?' said Jess, mystified.

The letter consisted of a couple of hurriedly-written lines: 'A matter of importance takes me to London. I shall not return to-night.'

That was all. There was no word of explanation. What could have induced him to take so sudden a step? He could only have one motive, as she thought—he had seen John. Angry words had passed between them: he had driven Upcraft from the house with gibes and insults; and now he had gone to London to give information against him—against the man she loved—the escaped convict.

It was pitiable. But the thought of her father's unkindly action did not greatly distress her to-night; her heart was too full of happiness. She sat down beside his study fire, rejoicing to think that he would be out of the way when Upcraft came. She would make up to him for her father's insults with loving words. She stirred the fire into a cheerful blaze; then she began to listen for his coming. He could not be long now. He would be sure to outstrip Jim, in his haste to reach her side, the moment he had read her message.

The minutes went by; but neither John nor the messenger appeared. Presently Mrs Gilkes came in with the tea-tray. Jess was sitting with her head between her hands, looking vacantly before her.

'A bit lonely, ain't you, miss?' said the woman soothingly. 'Well, it ain't to be wondered at. You'd like me to stop and sleep here to-night, maybe?'

'Yes, please, Mrs Gilkes.—How long has Jim been gone?'

'A good ten minutes,' said the woman.

'Not more?'

'Not a minute more by the kitchen clock,' said Mrs Gilkes, 'I do assure you.'

'It seems like an hour to me,' said Jess. Then she added, looking round at the tea-tray: 'Would you bring another cup? I am expecting a friend.'

The little brass kettle on the hob began to sing. John would soon be here now. In another ten minutes she might safely count upon hearing his step upon the road. Her heart beat faster at the thought. She would hurry out and call to him by name, and see his arms held out to take her to him at last.

It was getting late. The ten minutes had stretched into an hour—an hour into two—and still there was no sign of John Upcraft's coming. What could the reason be? If the boy had not found him at the inn, he would surely have returned to tell her of his failure long ago. She became filled with the dread that something had happened. Mrs Gilkes's restless step in the kitchen told Jess that Jim's mother, too, was getting anxious. She could stop indoors no longer. She drew on her hooded cloak, and went to the kitchen in all haste.

'I'm going down to the village, Mrs Gilkes,' said she, 'to look for your Jim.'

'Thank 'ee, miss! I am a bit worried about

him,' said the woman tremulously ; 'though he's old enough now, you would think, to take care of himself ; wouldn't you ?' While speaking, she lit the lantern. Jess took it from her, and stepped out into the cold and heavy mist.

She was painfully reminded, as she groped along, of that night when out upon the marshes three years ago. But the air was keener to-night, and the mist far denser. But she went bravely on towards the village, stepping upon the rays from the lantern as fast as they fell in her way. How silent the marshlands seemed—how desolate ! Nothing audible but the patterning of her own hurrying feet upon the frosty ground. The noise of the signal-gun had ceased at last.

But presently the patterning of other feet caught her ear. She stopped to listen, thinking that the sound might be the echo of her own. But no : they still came on—nearer and nearer.

It was Jim's step ! She recognised it now. She raised the lantern above her head and called to him loudly. She received no answer, except a quickening of the patterning feet ; and in another moment Jim—hot-faced and horror-stricken, as he looked—came within the narrow circle of light.

'Jim ! What is it ?'

'I—I've found him !' said Jim distressfully.

'Where ? Wasn't he at the inn ?'

'No, miss, he wasn't.'

'Is he there now ?'

'No, no, miss.'

'Then where—where is he ?' said Jess.

Jim burst out crying. 'Mur—murdered,' sobbed the boy, in a frightened whisper, 'in Thurrock Wood.'

to grant the request, and a most unlooked-for production was the result. The boy gathered from the neighbouring swamps all kinds of hideous reptiles—adders, lizards, toads, snakes, and many other repulsive crawling creatures—and from these models he compounded a monster which he depicted as about to issue from the shield. When finished he led his father into the room, and his terror and horror proved that the boy was successful. This production was afterwards sold by Leonardo for a hundred ducats, and subsequently found its way to the ducal palace at Milan ; but was destroyed in a looting raid as an object of horror by those who did not appreciate art. The poor peasant lost his promised shield, but was satisfied by another on which the boy painted the simple subject of a heart pierced with a dart.

When Da Vinci was about twenty years of age he became a member of a guild of painters, and began work as an independent artist at Florence, where he executed many pictures of great credit, in which the universality of his genius soon appeared. He was by far the greatest physiologist of his time, and the first who made a study of anatomy as connected with art. He wrote a book on the Anatomy of the Horse, and afterwards made an almost exhaustive study of the human frame. He was well skilled also in optics and geometry, was a good carver, had an excellent voice, and invented a species of lyre for himself, to which he would sing his own verses and music. He had a well-formed person, and delighted in manly exercises ; was dexterous in the use of arms, and loved well to manage a high-mettled steed. The fame of Leonardo da Vinci soon spread all over Italy, and the Duke of Milan invited him to his court ; and having formed a design of supplying the city of Milan with water by a new canal, Leonardo was entrusted with the management of the affair. This canal is two hundred miles in length, and is a masterly piece of engineering.

After serving the Duke in the capacity of architect and engineer, Leonardo was requested to exhibit his skill as a painter. His celebrated 'Last Supper'—his chief work—was the result. It was painted on the wall of the refectory of the Dominicans. The work took him a very long time, for he would wander about the city searching for models to serve for the various persons he wished to depict, and whenever a group or an attitude struck him he drew it on his tablets. All was finished with the exception of two persons—the one was the figure of Christ, and the other was the disciple Judas. He had wandered far, and had searched high and low, but could not find a presence noble enough for the one, or a physiognomy base enough for the other.

A year elapsed, and still the picture remained unfinished. At last the prior of the convent complained to the Grand-Duke of the unnecessary delay of Da Vinci in completing the picture. The artist in defence pleaded that he worked at the picture for two hours every day.

'May it please your Highness,' said the overbearing prior, 'he has not entered the convent doors for a year.'

'It is true I have not entered the convent,' said Leonardo ; 'but it is also true that I have worked

#### THE GENIUS OF LEONARDO DA VINCI

It was in that golden period in the history of art, the few years between 1490 and 1520, when the greatest painters whom the world had ever seen were living and working together, that Leonardo da Vinci flourished. Bright, indeed, were those days for Italy which saw Michael Angelo, Raphael, Correggio, Giorgione, Benvenuto Cellini, and Titian. The son of a notary at Florence, and called Da Vinci from the place of his birth, Leonardo, who was born in 1452, created for himself a name that can well be placed in the list of his most illustrious contemporaries. He was at once painter, poet, sculptor, anatomist, architect, engineer, chemist, musician, mechanician, and philosopher, although his fame now rests on his accomplishments as a painter. While young he was placed under Andrea del Verrocchio, a painter and sculptor of some note, who employed the youth to execute one of the angels in a picture of 'The Baptism of Christ.' This he did with so much softness and richness of colour, that it far surpassed the rest of the picture. Verrocchio, when he saw this, was so struck with mortification, that he never again took up his brush, and confined himself to his sculpture, 'enraged that a child should thus excel him.'

It happened about this time that a peasant on the estate which his father owned brought him a circular piece of wood cut from a fig-tree, and desired the young painter to make him an ornament for his cottage. His father urged the boy

at the picture for two hours every day. I have at last succeeded in finding a head which will serve as a model for the greatest and the most noble being that ever trod the earth. The head of Judas remains to be done ; and I have for six months past frequented daily, morning and evening, the Borghetto, where the lowest refuse of the population live. I have not yet found the features I am in quest of. These once found, the picture is finished in a day. If, however, I am not successful in my search, I shall rest satisfied with the face of the prior, which would suit my purpose excellently well, only that for a long time I have been hesitating about taking such liberty with him in his own convent.'

From the fact that it was painted in oil upon plaster that was not dry, this great picture was, unfortunately, very short-lived. It was finished in 1498 ; in 1540 it is spoken of by Armenini as half effaced ; and Scannelli, who examined it in 1642, wrote of it as 'a thing that once was.' Its beauty was not improved by the improvements of the Fathers, who, in order to reach their kitchen the easier, cut a doorway clean through the middle of the picture. In 1726, with singular vandalism, the order employed an artist, Bellotti, who pretended to restore the lost colours, but who really painted the whole picture over again ; and finally, in 1770, one Mazza scraped off most of the few outlines that remained of the original, and inserted heads of his own, with the exception of three, when he was stopped by a new prior, who revered art and the name of Leonardo da Vinci.

The history of this unfortunate masterpiece is by no means ended, nor the chapter of accidents at all completed. In 1796 Bonaparte forbade any military use to be made of the chamber, but soon after one of the generals, ignoring the order or not knowing of its existence, knocked down the doors and made a stable of it. The dragoons amused themselves by adding to and embellishing the picture. For some years the room was used as a military store ; and in 1800 a flood penetrated into it and covered the floor a foot deep with water, which was suffered to remain until it dried up of itself.

Such is the history of Da Vinci's 'Last Supper.' Happily, however, Francis I had a copy taken of it, which he placed at St Germain ; and numerous contemporary copies exist, although the great original is mouldering away on the wall of the convent of the Madonna delle Grazie.

In 1505, after Da Vinci had been driven out of Milan by the disturbances in Lombardy, the Florentines commissioned him to paint, together with Michael Angelo, the Council Chamber of their city. A jealousy arose between the two artists, and each having his partisans, they became open enemies. About this time the young painter Raphael came to Florence to see the wonderful works of the great Da Vinci, and they made so strong an impression upon him as to produce a change in his own style of painting. In 1513, Da Vinci left Florence to proceed to Rome, where Leo X. resolved to employ him, upon which the artist set about distilling oils and preparing varnish with which to cover his pictures. Leo, on hearing of this, said, that 'nothing could be expected from a man who thought of finishing his works before he had begun them.'

In 1516, Leonardo visited the court of the young French king, Francis I., who bestowed upon him a yearly allowance of seven hundred scudi and a residence near Amboise. Here the great painter expired, 2d May 1519, aged sixty-seven years.

The genuine works of Leonardo da Vinci are exceedingly rare. In the Louvre is a celebrated production of his, 'St Anna,' and in the National Gallery is a good specimen, 'Our Lady of the Rocks,' where it will be observed that though his figures are graceful and expressive, his rocks in the famous picture are 'literally no better than those on a china plate.' Most of the pictures now attributed to him were wholly, or in part, painted by his scholars or by imitators from his cartoons. Of nine pictures in the Louvre attributed to him, three only are considered genuine. In the Royal Library at Windsor there are three volumes of manuscripts and drawings, containing a vast variety of subjects—portraits, heads, groups, and single figures ; fine anatomical studies of horses ; a battle of elephants, full of spirit ; drawings in optics, hydraulics ; plans of military machines, and musical airs noted in his own hand. The Royal Library at Paris contains several of his philosophical treatises, one of which, the *Treatise on Painting*, has been published, and is the foundation of all that has since been written on the subject. His manuscripts are very difficult to decipher ; the letters are formed in a most fantastic manner ; and, moreover, the writing reads from right to left, and was written by the author backwards, and with his left hand, though to this day no one knows the reason why.

#### UNDER THE CHERRY-TREE.

##### PART II.—CONCLUSION.

In such full cry was the hunt, that when half-way round the tree the Baron came upon a lady whose approach he had not observed, it was all he could do to lower his weapon in time. During the moment of mutual amazement that followed, the lady's elderly countenance settled into an expression of displeasure mingled with disgust.

'So the African cannibals have *not* dined off him.' Something in this strain would have run her thoughts, if put into words. 'Back again, like the worst penny that ever was !'

'My deepest respects to you, Countess !'

'Good-morning to you, Baron Blasewitz. Would you mind telling me—ahem—what you are doing with this—this broom ? Have you brought it back from your travels ?' Here the Countess had recourse to her eyeglass for the purpose of a closer examination. 'I presume it is an African specimen ?'

'Pardon me ; it is the vulgar European broom. I take the liberty of introducing myself as cherry warden.'

'As what ?'

'As cherry warden. This broom is the badge and sceptre of my office.'

'I don't believe a word of it, of course,' reflected the Countess. 'There is some deeper meaning here. I have always said that he is a most dangerous and undesirable person.'

'Up there, Countess, hangs the prosperity of

a poor widow who has a quantity of children—six or seven ; I don't remember exactly how many.'

'A poor widow? I am a widow myself, and therefore I have always a most particular sympathy for widows.'

The severity of the Countess's features relaxed. After all, there seemed to be some truth about the matter ; yet, notwithstanding, she felt convinced that the man was on *Angélique's* track.

'Have you not happened to catch sight of my niece, Baron Blasewitz?' she inquired, very craftily, as she considered.

'Your niece? Yes ; that is to say, I saw her from a distance.' (There was no need to specify how short that distance had been.)

'He is trying to deceive me,' was the Countess's wrathful reflection.

'And where was my niece, pray, when you saw her—from a distance? I have been searching for her for this last hour in vain.'

The Baron's reply was very quietly but firmly to hand over the broom. 'Permit me, Countess.'

In her surprise, the Countess actually took it between two fingers. 'What is the meaning of this?'

'I shall be back again in five minutes ; I am going to look for your niece.'

'Wait, Baron Blasewitz—stop! That is not what I meant.'

'I understand perfectly what you mean,' called back the Baron, already started on his quest. 'Make your mind quite easy, Countess ; I am sure to find her.'

'Wait, Baron Blasewitz!' cried *Angélique's* aunt in an agony. 'I am coming with you—I am coming after you!'

'Think of the cherry-tree and of the poor widow with the eight children!' were the Baron's last words as he vanished over the curve of the hill.

A poor widow with eight children—to be sure ; the Countess had almost forgotten that part of the matter. After all, one could not be so heartless ; that is to say, supposing there was any truth in the story. But, all the same, the situation was highly vexatious. If only *Angélique* were back again! It was absolutely certain that that scamp of a Blasewitz knew where she was ; he had smiled so diabolically. Yes, that Mephistophelean smile enlightened her. It was all a plot. It must be baffled ; but how? To follow them would be to leave the tree unguarded, and that probably meant starvation to the widow and her eight children!

'In Heaven's name, help! help! help!' burst from the Countess's agitated lips.

An apple-cheeked, cherry-lipped village maiden was the first to answer the cry. 'Where is it you have hurt yourself?' she asked, a little breathless from the pace at which she had come.

'Nowhere, my dear child ; it is only my fears, my excitement. I must be off ; but you, my child, remain here ; take this broom. Think of the widow with the nine children ; do not leave this spot.—Oh *Angélique*, *Angélique*!' And pressing the broom into the new-comer's hand, the Countess turned and fled down the pathway.

'I don't understand a word of it,' was the buxom maiden's conclusion. 'A widow, did she say she was? And has got nine children? And I am

not to leave the spot? Well, I don't mind staying, since there are plenty of cherries to eat, and I know that Seppel wouldn't grudge them to me. But I can't get the broom to fit in at all. Nothing particular to be discovered about it, either, turn it round and round as I may. Well, I shall not let my hair grow gray over it ; I shall just tell Seppel. Oh, the sweet cherries!' And tossing aside the broom, the latest arrival under the cherry-tree set to work upon the branches.

She had been most pleasantly occupied for more than five minutes, when Baron Blasewitz reappeared over the brow of the hill, not in the best of humours, for he had failed to catch even a glimpse of *Angélique*. 'I am inconsolable, Countess,' he began ; but here the branches rustled, and a laughing face looked out from between the leaves.

'Ha, lass! what are you doing there?—Hold, I say!—Heavens! My promise to *Angélique*, the post which she entrusted to me!—Leave the cherries alone, I say!'

'Mind your own business.—What can such a fine gentleman have to do with the cherries, pray?'

'Unlucky creature! what brought you here?'

'A lady, a very fine lady indeed, gave me that broom there, and said she was a widow with ten children.'

'The children seem to be multiplying in proportion as the cherries are decreasing,' reflected the Baron within himself, at the same time that he angrily possessed himself of the hand full of cherries which the girl was attempting to hide from him.

'Don't be rude, or I'll tell Seppel,' she laughed, turning away to stuff cherries into her mouth with the other hand.

'The other hand! Give me the other hand!' cried the Baron, too absorbed in the object of the moment to heed the light step which was drawing near over the grass.

It was fortunate for Countess *Angélique* that Mother Resi's precious cherry-tree was not the only one which grew upon this patch of ground, for without the support of a friendly stem, it is not improbable that this much-tried young lady would at this juncture have fainted. As it was, she had to rub her eyes and look again. No, there could be no mistake ; he was holding the creature's hand. Then she had guessed aright ; it was a *rendez-vous*. 'And, oh dear, she is pretty, very pretty,' groaned *Angélique* at the bottom of her palpitating heart.

'Countess *Angélique*!' and, with a start, the Baron let go the hand he was holding, the owner of which ran off, still laughing and still in possession of the plunder. 'Countess *Angélique*, you perceive my embarrassment'—

'I perceive it,' assented *Angélique* in a voice which unluckily was not quite so steady as it was chilly.

'What can I say in my defence?'

'Pray, do not trouble yourself ; I neither expect nor wish to hear any defence.'

'*Angélique*, why this cruelty?'

'Who has given you the right to call me by my name?'

'But ten minutes ago I did so'—

'Ten minutes ago? Ten minutes ago I was foolish and blind. Ten minutes ago, you had

not abused my confidence, abused it most un-  
worthily'—

'But after all'—

'Oh, I can keep my calmness no longer.  
Answer me plainly: do you confess yourself  
guilty—yes or no?'

'Unfortunately, my guilt is too staring to be  
seen.'

'What flippancy!' she thought aghast. 'He  
says it to my very face!'

'Angélique, you are crying!' For in truth  
she had pulled out an exquisite morsel of lace  
and *batiste*, and was gasping for breath behind it.  
Of the two, the Baron was undoubtedly the most  
thunder-struck; nothing had prepared him for  
the stolen cherries being taken so tragically.  
'What a heart she has!' he reflected, in a mixture  
of agony and admiration, and quite oblivious of  
the fact that the tree was being meanwhile  
plundered at leisure by the very scum of the village  
street. 'She is mourning for the poor widow  
with the dozen children!—Angélique!' he pleaded,  
'calm yourself; it is not such a very bad case.'

'It is bad enough. Go away, Baron Blasewitz,  
go back to Africa; let me never see you again.  
My aunt was right; I should have believed her  
sooner.—Ah! here she comes!' as the Countess  
emerged upon the pathway with bonnet somewhat  
awry and a flounce hanging in a loop from her  
skirt.

'Here I have them at last!'

'Dearest aunt!' sobbed Angélique, throwing  
herself into her aunt's arms, 'you were right;  
he is a worthless man; I wish never to see him  
again.'

'I always told you so,' gasped the Countess,  
still somewhat short of breath.

'Sepp! Seppel! Seppi!' rang out from the  
background; and before any more words had been  
exchanged, Mother Resi appeared, armed with a  
long-handled wooden spoon. 'Seppel, the soup  
is in the basin.'

But here her eye fell on the broken branches,  
the torn-off bunches of the pillaged tree, and she  
stood still in consternation. 'So that's the way  
my cherries are looked after! Wait a bit, you  
good-for-nothings!' This time it was the wooden  
spoon that swept the coast clear. 'Seppel! Sepp!  
The wretched boy is right enough to  
hide himself.'

'Take time, take time; I'm coming.' And  
laden with something wrapped in a red cotton  
handkerchief, Seppel emerged from between the  
trees.

'Look at the tree!' screamed his mother, taking  
him by the arm. 'Where are the cherries gone  
to? Ha?'

Seppel looked and rubbed his eyes. 'Well,  
anyway I didn't eat them, and I didn't leave  
them alone either. That young lady took the  
broom away from me.'

'And I gave it to Baron Blasewitz.'

'And I handed over my sceptre to Countess  
Lilienburg.'

'And I left that most objectionable broom in  
the hand of a pretty peasant girl who was passing  
at that moment.'

'What? All these have watched my cherries,  
and that's all that remains of them!'

'There isn't more than one pretty peasant girl  
for five miles round,' decided Seppel. 'That

can't have been any one but Mirzl.—Here she  
comes, by good luck.—Mirzl, let's hear what you  
did with the broom?'

'The broom?' laughed Mirzl, as she joined the  
group. 'Why, I let it lie on the grass, to be  
sure. One doesn't require a broom for eating  
cherries.'

'My cherries!' cried Mother Resi. 'Even she  
robs me!'

'Make your mind easy; I hadn't the chance  
of robbing you half as much as I should have  
liked, for scarcely had I begun, when all at once  
there rushes up that rude man there and tears  
away my hand from the tree.'

'Rude man?' Did Angélique's ears hear  
aright? Could that have been the reason?—

'I could not do otherwise, my good girl. The  
tree had been entrusted to my care, and I was  
responsible for the cherries.'

A mist seemed to be rolling away from before  
the young Countess's eyes. She began to think  
she had been very stupid.

'What have you got inside that handkerchief?'  
inquired Mirzl, who meanwhile had been coqueting  
with Seppel's red bundle. 'Is it anything  
for me?'

'Take time. It's something for the young  
lady there; but her aunt is not to see it.'

'My niece has no secrets from me,' said the  
Countess quickly.

'Oh, you are the aunt, are you? Then it's  
you who aren't to see it.'

'I am lost,' breathed Angélique in an agony,  
just as the well-meaning Seppel nudged her  
elbow and slowly opened the red handkerchief.  
'Is this your keepsake, perhaps?'

'Goodness! can that be my locket?'

'Well, it's a bit smashed up, to be sure; but  
that comes from the nails in my boots; but  
anyhow, the picture is in one piece, and do you  
know what I'm thinking?—'

But what it was that Seppel was thinking  
never came to the light of day, for at that  
moment Countess Lilienburg, looking over her  
niece's shoulder, almost shrieked out, 'Baron  
Blasewitz!'

The events that followed upon the Countess's  
exclamation came at so giddy a pace that nobody  
understood what was happening until it had  
actually happened. The Baron in reply to what  
he took to be a summons, sprang forward just in  
time to pick up a small object that had slipped  
from Angélique's trembling fingers.

Had he seen? was the question which dyed her  
cheeks redder than the ripest of the cherries that  
grew upon Mother Resi's tree, as she put out her  
hand for the morsel of paper. One terrified  
glance at his face was enough for the answer:  
yes, he had seen.

'And that locket was yours, Angélique? I  
may call you Angélique now, may I not?'

'I—I don't know what to say.'

'Do you find it so hard to pardon my want of  
vigilance as cherry warden?'

'Oh, bother the eternal cherries! That was  
not what put me out of temper; it was—'

'What, then?'

'That girl over there—you were holding her  
hand.'

'Oh, bother the clumsy girl; to me she was  
only a cherry-eating machine.'

'He calls her clumsy!' rapturously reflected Angélique, and in the same moment she was aware of her hand being taken.

'I may do it now, may I not?'

'No, you may not,' interposed the Countess excitedly, recovering from a momentary attack of stupefaction. 'Questions of that sort are put to the aunt first, and to the niece afterwards.'

'Take time,' advised Seppel soothingly. 'It's too late in the day to begin scolding now. They'll have to get their own way, you see.'

'Dearest aunt!—'

'A pretty business indeed! But it can't be helped now, I suppose.' That unlucky cherry-tree!

'Oh, that lucky, lucky cherry-tree!' the Baron ventured devoutly to murmur under cover of his moustache.

'Take him, then, for goodness sake, and see if you can turn this madman into a sensible husband.'

Aunt and niece had been in each other's arms for at least a minute, when the attention of the bystanders was diverted by the reappearance of the same spruce, muslin-aproned young person whose visit had surprised Mother Resi earlier in the day.

'I have come back again on account of those cherries,' said Frau Netti, going up to Mother Resi. 'You had better gather them at once, for there are thunder-clouds rising. Wet fruit won't keep a month.'

'They're gathered,' said Mother Resi, wringing her hands, 'but by other fingers than mine.—There, look at the tree!'

Frau Netti turned and looked, and in her amazement almost dropped her sun umbrella. Was this poor battered and stripped caricature of a cherry-tree indeed identical with the richly-laden specimen which had rejoiced her connoisseur's eye scarcely an hour ago?

'Those good-for-nothing village rascals,' sobbed Mother Resi, disappearing behind her apron. 'But as for its being my fault!—'

'Whose fault, then? In truth, there is no putting trust in these peasant folks!—Good-evening; I shall buy my cherries elsewhere. A very good-evening to you!' And the confectioner's wife flounced off with her sun umbrella at a distinctly aggressive angle.

'Two kreuzers beyond market-price,' came in gulps from Mother Resi. 'I'll never get such an offer again.'

'What was the value of the cherries?' asked Baron Blasewitz, feeling that this was not a day on which he could with any patience bear the sight of tears.

'At least forty florins.'

'I shall give you fifty.'

'And I as well,' Angélique hastened to add.

'You may put me down for the same sum,' said the Countess with a tolerably good grace.

'A hundred and fifty florins!' Mother Resi's broad countenance reappeared from behind the apron. 'Well, well, to be sure, it's a better cherry year even than I thought. I don't remember having seen its like in all my living days.'

'Nor I either,' unhesitatingly assented the Baron.—'What say you, my love? Have you

ever known such ravishing cherries as grow upon this tree!'

The question was put in an undertone, and Angélique's answer is not on record.

#### A LINK WITH THE PAST.

BEFORE me lies an old pocket-book, bound in faded red leather, with silver clasps. I have counted the leaves of old yellow paper and find there are two hundred of them. It is an ungainly-looking article for a lady's pocket-book, but this one belonged to my great-grandmother, and pockets were pockets in her day. (If anything was lost in her house, her sons would say, 'It must be in Noah's Ark,' meaning one of her pockets. She always wore two, one on each side.) The latest date in it is 1775. Her firm handwriting, the slowly, carefully formed letters, show the serious business that using ink on paper was in those days, and even now the ink is black as jet.

A pocket-book should show the character of the possessor. This one tells the tale of a life; for there are more medical recipes in it than any others, though I find many cookery recipes, such as, 'My Aunt Betsy's Way of making Mince Pies,' &c.; and other entries, as 'John Hunter came to pay me one year's rent for his cottage at Wild Moor, Two pounds fifteen shillings, September the 22d, 1769.' Or, 'Paid my maid, Febe Barber, fifteen shillings for one quarter's wages, 14th day of March 1772.'

My great-grandmother was the widow of a doctor, who had settled down on his marriage in a country cottage in North Hampshire, on an open tract of common land, surrounded by moorlands and water-meadows, often half-flooded over by the river that ran through them, desolate enough in winter, but lovely beyond description in summer. Her short married life, as I have been told, was a very happy one. Her husband's love, till the grave parted them, was that of a devoted lover. He died, leaving her with two boys, one four and the other two years old.

After she had braved the first days of sorrow and the nights spent in grief, her boys would creep into her room in the morning and lay their heads on her pillow, wet with her tears. Then hope would come back. Amongst her neighbours she was counted rich, for she had fifty pounds a year of her own. And who in the whole country-side could distil waters as she did, or know more of herbs and medicine than she?

A few nights after her husband's death, a man came to her in great trouble. He was the tenant of the Court Farm—a man who wore leather gaiters, a long green linen smock-frock, and a straw hat of home-platted coarse straw. He knocked at her door, and, with trembling, courteous words, begged to be excused. 'But our little Ben is taken with the croup, and no one to help him now but you, dame! If you will come and see him before he dies, it will be some comfort to poor Jeannie.' He would put her on Jock, her husband's white cobby.

She straightway donned her wimple and old brown Spanish merino cloak—in her day merino

came from Spain—a full cloak, fuller than the skirts of these days. It was neatly gathered into a yoke. A black, velvet-lined tippet reached the waist. It was tied with strings at the neck, and fastened down the front with clasps. It had large arm-holes to pass the arms through. Her saddle, or pillion, was covered with thick gray quilted cloth, and hung in an inner room of her house.

When Farmer Maynard came to the door with the old cob, her maid appeared with this structure, which was hurriedly put on the back of the docile animal; and Dame Baker mounted, with the assistance of her maid Febe, who at the same moment hung a small reticule basket of white and black squares of platted straw on her arm, containing a silver spoon and a bottle of simple emetic; and then the dame started with her guide to the Court Farm, two miles distant. The Court Farm was an old red brick building standing within fifty yards of the parish church, the lichgate of which they passed by in the moonlight, and the churchyard where her loved husband now slept. A firm resolve came into her heart, that henceforth, as far as she could, she would do his work amongst those who called upon her for aid or help.

On entering the house, they found Mrs Maynard sitting by an old oak crib, in which lay little Ben, throwing himself about in an agony, with the hoarse croupy groans following fast one on the other, his poor little face black and swollen. Dame Baker gently lifted him on her knee and poured out into her silver spoon a dose of her emetic, and then she asked for mustard. Alas! none was in Mrs Maynard's store. 'Bring me the kettle; we must use hot water.' She took from her neck a silk handkerchief, and after carefully rolling it up into a tight ball, she held it on the child's throat, and with her steady hand poured enough boiling water to raise a small blister. She then turned the child, and proceeded to do the same just at the nape of the neck. A short time of suspense, and then the false membrane was thrown off; then came relief, followed by a deep sleep; and shortly, health returned.

From that day, my great-grandmother took her husband's place. No doctor lived within twenty miles. Often at night she might be seen—sometimes with a stalwart form beside her, lantern in hand, leading her pony—making her way to some out-lying home. Or in the dark days of winter, when the new hedges are set in the fields, an anguished worn face, with an arm in a sling, would come to her, with the cruel, poisonous blackthorn embedded in the poor burning inflamed palm, or deep between the fingers; and with gentle, soothing words she would immerse it in some cooling cataplasm, and extract the poisonous thorn. In those days the country folk were still superstitious, and they believed she knew some charm; but, to use their own words, they would say the dame 'whispered it out.'

She never took any fee; but the farmers would send grain from their granaries to her; the Squire, game and fish; the parson, a choice plant, or tree, or fruit from his garden. The poor people would bring the herbs and roots that she asked them for; the children, nuts and berries.

In her turn, she gave liberally from her stores wherever she saw a case of need.

On the occasion of the only visit the Squire and his lady ever made to London, they brought her a beautiful pair of pattens with embroidered leather straps. (All ladies wore pattens in those days.) The Squire and his lady ordered silver rings to be put on hers, for the old Squire said, 'She deserved to walk on silver. Hadn't she cured their only son of an ague?'

Her two sons grew up good and handsome, and settled on farms of their own near her. She lived to be a little over fifty years old; but after one of her long night journeys in the snow of winter, that took her past the old gray ruins of Silchester—a place that filled her with strange mystic fancies, as she said—on her return to her home she went to bed; and when morning came, they found her calm and placid in her last sleep. They buried her beside her husband in the old churchyard, close to the red brick Court Farm. Her generation passed away, and another since. The old church and the old farmhouse are still standing, and looking the same now as they did then. But all that is left of my great-grandmother are the old recipes in her quaint handwriting in the old pocket-book with the silver clasp.

#### TOM AND I.

THE meadow with its clover sweet  
Stretched far before our view,  
The daisies grew beneath our feet,  
The hyacinths were blue.  
I saw o'erhead a merry band  
Of purple swallows fly,  
When we walked through the meadow-land  
Together, Tom and I.

The linnet piped amid the sedge,  
The blackbird's notes were gay,  
On hill and plain, on bough and hedge,  
The happy sunshine lay;  
He questioned as he held my hand  
I murmured a reply,  
As we walked through the meadow-land  
Together, Tom and I.

And oft the spring has brought since then  
The bloom to pear and peach,  
The violets to the lowly glen,  
The green leaves to the beech,  
And scattered with her fairy wand  
The gray mists from the sky,  
Since we walked through that meadow-land  
Together, Tom and I.

And we have had since that spring day  
Our share of good and ill,  
And now, though old, and bent, and gray,  
We're fond, true lovers still.  
In perfect faith, and hand in hand,  
We wait the parting nigh,  
Since we'll meet in the better land  
Together, Tom and I.

M. ROCK.

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